

**FIELD TRIP TO THE AMHARA AND TIGRAY REGIONS  
25 September - 13 October, 1995**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The field trip was carried out in order to collect information on the condition of the crops after the end of the kiremt rainy season as well as the situation in general in food deficit areas. The situation generally seems to be more favourable this year as compared to the same time in 1994. However, there are many pocket areas with problems similar to, and, in some cases, worse than last year.

The kiremt rains started with little or no delay and were better distributed than in 1994. However, in most northern parts of the country the rains stopped up to two weeks early, leading to moisture stress on the crops in the flowering stage. At the time of the field trip it was not yet known to what extent this factor will effect the crop yield as the zonal preharvest assessments were just underway. Many pockets, mainly located in the highland areas have also suffered from hailstorms and flooding. No major plant pests or animal disease outbreaks were reported, except Welo Bush Cricket infestations in Wag Hamra zone and adjacent areas.

Food distributions could not be carried out as planned throughout the visited areas due to a shortage of food supplies, delays in transport and inaccessibility during the rainy season. However, in the most affected areas of South Welo, North Welo, North and South Gonder and Wag Hamra zones, relief food was prepositioned before the onset of the main (n7eher) season, or beneficiaries were given two or three months rations.

In most places the food distributions were linked to food for work activities or Employment Generation Schemes (EGS). The execution of the new policy of linking relief with development varies from zone to zone and even from wereda to wereda, with different levels of success. The zonal bureaux of the Commission for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness (CDPP), line ministries and NGOs involved in the implementation of FFW and EGS projects are aware of the difficulties and are already working on how to improve implementation in the coming year.

## **2. AMHARA REGION**

According to the regional Bureau for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness (DPP), 52 of the 136 weredas in the region are permanently food deficient due to land degradation and overpopulation. The average landholding is estimated at 0.2 - 0.5 hectares per household, with agricultural production as low as 2 quintal per head per year. In order to improve the conditions for the population, of which 95 percent are engaged in agricultural activities, the regional administration together with the Bureau for DPP have set the following priority areas for development: agriculture, natural resources, road construction, health and education. Specific areas of intervention would be conservation, increasing agricultural inputs, social services and infrastructure. The priority zones for programme implementation are Wag Hamra, North Welo, South Goider, North Goider and South Welo zones. Development has to be integrated with government plans, and a five-year plan of action is to be finalised in October. The main principle underlying development activities is the participation of the

community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all projects (participatory development). NGOs that are working in the region are being urged to follow this policy, structure.

According to the regional Bureau for DPP, the execution of EGS has been fairly successful in Amhara Region, considering limited availability of inputs and various other constraints. It is now time to evaluate the projects which have been carried out in order to improve the system. In this regard, the regional Bureau for DPP undertook a study to identify the main problems. Nine points were mentioned as the main constraints for a successful execution of EGS.-

- 1) Planning: The line departments do not show enough interest in EGS activities.
- 2) Lack of awareness: Through workshops and training sessions, the planning and implementation of EGS projects and early warning activities has to be improved.
- 3) Lack of capacity: The allocated budget for EGS implementation is insufficient.
- 4) Manpower shortage: No budget was allocated for employment of skilled professionals.
- 5) Shortage of food inputs: The standard of 3 kg/day/participant ration could not be met due to shortage of food Supplies.
- 6) Shortage of hand tools and other inputs: In many cases hand tools and other equipment were the property of the working individuals and their availability for ongoing community projects was not assured.
- 7) Lack of warehouses.
- 8) Absence of off-the-shelf projects.
- 9) Variation in implementation of EGS projects in the various zones and weredas.

After analyzing the above-mentioned points the regional Bureau for DPP has a plan to implement pilot EGS in weredas of North Gonder, Wag Hamra and North Welo zones in 1996. which then could be applied to all other zones.

The regional Early Warning Department reports that the outcome of the belg harvest was relatively good this year. The belg production is important in four zones: North Shewa, South Welo, North Welo and Oromyia. The contribution of the belg crop production to the total annual production in these zones is normally around 20 - 25 percent. Approximately 75 percent of the planned area for belg production was cultivated this year. Furthermore, in several parts Of South Welo zone the beig harvest coincided with the onset of the kirenit rains.

The kiremt rains started on time. however, flooding and liallstorms occurred in pocket areas of North Gonder. South Gonder. South Welo, Way Hamra and East Gojani zone,-,-

Welo Bush Cricket infestations were reported in the entire Wag Hamra zone and partially in North Welo, South Welo, North Gonder and South Gonder zones (around the Tekeze Basin).

The pre-harvest assessment carried out in the zone is expected to reveal further detail ls of the actual damage done.

According to the regional Bureau for DPP, food distributions have to continue for western South Welo until the end of 1995 (3 months), whereas in the other areas of North Welo and North Shewa two more monthly ration should be sufficient.

The regional Bureau for DPP has allocated 5,000 tons of food to be distributed in the various zones over the next two months. The outcome of the pre-harvest assessments will determine how the food will be distributed in each zone.

The regional DPP assumes that the number of beneficiaries should be decreased in some places from October onwards. Therefore, arriving food supplies should be put aside as carry over stock for distribution in 1996. There seems to be a disagreement over this issue between the regional and some zonal Bureau for DPP (North Welo, Wag Hamra and South Welo), where the situation is still seen to be critical enough for food distributions to be continued in the coming months.

## **2.1. North Gonder zone**

The zonal Bureau of Agriculture has reported good kiremt rain distribution. Excessive hailstorms occurred in some highland areas, and flooding was experienced in the midhighlands of some weredas. Considerable damage to the growing crops in the following weredas has been attributed to severe flooding: Denbla, Tach Armachiho, Lay Armachiho, Dabat, Weaera, Tsegede, Adi Arkav and Belessa.

Welo Bush Crickets have damaged up to 7,000 hectares of cultivated land in the Tekeze Basin. The outbreak could not be completely controlled because of the remoteness of the infested area. In the affected lowland areas, replanting with short cycle crops such as chick peas was not possible.

The zonal Bureau for DPP reports that in addition to the vulnerable weredas of the Simien Mountains, the three weredas of Gonder Zur'ya, Dabat and Denbia weredas may need food 'd in the coming months. In Gonder Zur'ya, it has been reported that prior to the onset of the at I I I I I kiremt rains the inhabitants of seven kebeles suffered from a widespread and serious water born epidemic disease and subsequently only part of the land was cultivated. Planting in Dabat and Detibla weredas was also affected by flooding. In Denbla wereda, known as a surplus producing area for pepper (berbere) and an important supplier of berbere for Addis Ababa and Eritrea, large parts of the cultivated land were washed away when three rivers carrying high water merged with the rising water level of Lake Tana.

At the time of the visit (September 26, 1995), reports of movements of desert locust on the borders of Eritrea led to an alert in the northern weredas bordering Tigray. These areas were not in immediate danger, however, as the winds had turned and the locust swarms did not cross into Tigray.

## **2.2. South Gonder zone**

The present conditions in South Gonder zone are similar to the adjacent zones. In this zone, hailstorms have damaged crops in some areas.

A total of 268,000 persons are in need of food assistance until harvest time in November and December. The number of beneficiaries in Simada and Tach Gay'nt weredas had to be increased by 30 and 50 percent respectively, as the nutritional status of the population had deteriorated during the kiremt rainy season. However, Food for the Hungry International (FHI) which is the distributing agency in the two weredas, has sufficient stocks prepositioned and is reportedly in a position to cope with the current situation.

Some 2 1,000 inhabitants living on the slopes of Mount Guna, in Farta and Este weredas have had to be assisted since June and August respectively, due to unfavorable weather conditions as well as soil degradation.

### **2.3. Wag Hamra zone**

The kirenit rainy season lasted only six weeks, a fact that will have a negative impact on the harvest outcome. In addition to unfavourable rain conditions, the entire zone has been affected by outbreaks of the Welo Bush Crickets, which will further reduce crop yields.

The zonal Early Warning Committee also anticipates water shortage and lack of fodder for the animals before the end of the year.

The zonal Bureau for DPP has requested food assistance for 75,000 persons for October and November.

With the reduction of the number of weredas in the Amhara Region, the Wag Hamra Zonal Administration has started the process of reducing the number of weredas. The zone will comprise of three weredas in the future: Dehana, Sequala and Sekota. Abergele will be incorporated into Sekota wereda, Sahala into Sequala wereda and Gazgibla wereda will be partially integrated into Sekota and Dehana weredas.

### **2.4. North Welo zone**

The conditions in the six highland weredas of Delanta, Bugna, Wadia, Dawnt, Gidan and Meket remain critical. Food assistance is required up to the end of the year for 238,000 beneficiaries. The lowland weredas are, on the other hand, doing well. In Habro and Kobo weredas, Welo Bush Cricket infestations have been controlled with traditional methods and application of pesticides.

The zonal Bureau for DPP is still looking for a solution to assist the displaced who are in the proximity of the towns of Weldyia, Mersa. Strinka and Kobo.

### **2.5. South Welo zone**

The situation in the western part of South Welo has not improved. Wegedi, Debre Sina and Sayint weredas received food rations up to September from Save the Children Fund (UK) and the zonal Bureau for DPP is trying to provide emergency food aid to these weredas in order not to let the situation get out of control.

Apart from the western weredas, some kebeles in Kalu wereda, between Komboiclia and Bati, lost a large part of their crops during a severe hailstorm. In these kebeles, 13,200 people urgently need food assistance. An assessment mission from the zonal Bureau for DPP was on the spot and noticed that at least 50 houses were abandoned (apparently the people left to find work in the Dubti State Farm in Afar Region).

The Bureau of Agriculture reports that those farmers who lost some of their crops due to flooding in July and August obtained cash in order to buy chickpeas for replanting. The zonal pre-harvest assessment is expected to reveal how much of the lost land could be recultivated. This year the zone did not suffer from extensive plant pests. Only some minor appearances of Welo Bush Crickets were reported in the periphery of the zone.

## **3. TIGRAY REGION**

Zonal pre-harvest assessments were also underway in Tigray Region at the end of September and the beginning of October. The results of these assessments were to be available at the middle of October. The region as a whole is expected to have a better

harvest as compared to last year. However, the conditions in the Eastern zone and in pocket areas of the Central zone are expected to have deteriorated in comparison to last year.

At the time of the visit, the threat of desert locust infestations from Sudan or Eritrea was an issue of concern in the northern parts of the region. At the end of September, two large swarms were detected in the depression between Senafe on the Eritrea side and Igela wereda in the Central zone of Tigray; the situation was duly assessed and preparations made for control measures to be taken. On 10 October, the concerned staff of the Plant Protection Department of the Bureau of Agriculture reported that although there was no immediate threat to Ethiopia, close monitoring was still necessary. Subsequently, a spray aircraft was kept on stand-by at Mekelle airport.

Apart from serious Striga (a parasitic weed) infestations in the Western zone, no major outbreaks of plant pests or animal diseases were reported during the visit.

The following numbers of beneficiaries have received rations for the months of July and August:

Western zone	15,849 beneficiaries
Central zone	232,700 beneficiaries
Eastern zone	252,733 beneficiaries
Southern zone	219,314 beneficiaries
Total	<b>720,596 beneficiaries</b>

The same number of beneficiaries will receive food rations in October. The conditions in the Eastern zone are critical and the zonal Bureau for DPP has requested food for an additional 50,000 beneficiaries for October and November. However, the regional Bureau for DPP had only approved an increase of 30,000 beneficiaries.

Reports from Tile Relief Society of Tigray indicate that they have so far covered 75 percent of their targeted beneficiaries and consider tile conditions in their areas of operation as not extreme.

### **3. 1. Western Zone**

The zonal Bureau of Agriculture has reported relatively good rains except in Dima wereda, which is located south of the Tekeze River.

Striga is a serious problem on sorghum and maize crops in the lowland areas. The zonal Bureau of Agriculture expects a crop yield reduction of up to 30 percent as a result of this infestation.

Dima wereda has had only two or three days of rain and a very poor harvest the previous year. Food was prepositioned for 5,000 beneficiaries up to the end of the year. In July, food for a total of 8,000 beneficiaries had to be distributed. The zonal Bureau for DPP estimates that in the coming months over 10,000 persons would be in urgent need of food aid.

The wereda is accessible from Mai Tsemri on the Gonder - Axum main road. Relief food has to be transported with short haul trucks (90 km-from the main road to the wereda town and an additional 120 km to the east to the worst affected areas). Neither the regional Bureau for DPP nor REST are in a position to provide the necessary transport. The food has to be transported by private trucks from Mekelle at a cost of Birr 52 per quintal. No warehouse facilities are available at the spot and therefore food has to be stored in school buildings if it is [not] directly distributed.

### **3.2. Central zone**

The rains started on time, but stopped early at the end of August in ten weredas in the eastern part of the zone (in the former Adwa and Tembien awrajas).

Planted crops in the weredas were also extensively damaged by hailstorms. Around 6,200 hectares of crops were affected. 700 hectares were completely destroyed. There was a 75 percent damage on 1,600 hectares of cropland; on the remaining 3,900 hectares the damage was estimated to be between 25 and 75 percent. Floods damaged an additional 136 hectares.

### **3.3. Eastern zone**

According to the zonal Bureau of Agriculture, the outlook on the coming harvest is not very positive and the zonal authorities are expecting a larger food deficit than in the previous year. In the eastern weredas, the rains started late and made land preparation difficult. In August, two weredas experienced serious floods and hailstorms, whereas at the beginning of September they had no rainfall during the flowering stage of crops.

The number of beneficiaries in need of food assistance has to be increased from 250,000 to 300,000 in the remaining months of 1995. However, the regional Bureau for DPP has only accepted an increase of 30,000 beneficiaries.

### **3.4. Southern zone**

The belt producing lowland weredas had a good belt harvest and the long cycle sorghum and maize crops seem to be in good condition. Despite the fairly good belt harvest. However,

A total of 1,000 beneficiaries will need food rations for the last two months of the year. The Joint Relief Partnership (JRP) has reported that it will continue food distributions for 129,000 beneficiaries (including Mekelle town) in the next two months. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society/International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ERCS/IFRC) are also providing food for the FFW activities in the weredas of Adi Gidoill, Wajirat and Hinlalo. The zonal Bureau for DPR will undertake distributions in areas where JRP cannot provide assistance.

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